

Remarks

The outstanding Office Action reports that claims 1-10 are withdrawn from further consideration as a result of a restriction requirement. It is pointed out that claims 1-10 are cancelled. The Applicants reserve the right to pursue cancelled claims 1-10 in a divisional patent application.

The outstanding Office Action includes an objection to claims 11 and 13. In view of the amendments to claims 11 and 13, it is submitted that this objection has been rendered moot. Accordingly, withdrawal of this objection is requested.

The outstanding Office Action includes a rejection of 11-24 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. In view of the amendment to claims, it is submitted that the grounds for rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, has been rendered moot. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

Claim 11 is amended to characterize the separation matrix as a microbially contaminated separation matrix. As a result of the steps of claims 11, the separation matrix is provided with eliminated or reduced microbially content.

Claim 13 is cancelled.

Claims 14-17 and 20 are amended so that the units " $\text{g}\cdot\text{l}^{-1}$ " have been changed to "g/liter." One having ordinary skill in the art would clearly understand that g/liter are the units identified in the claims.

Claim 16 is amended by changing the lower limit to 0.12 g/liter.

Claim 24 is amended to refer to the EP 1997 test protocol.

In view of the above amendments to claims, withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph is requested.

The outstanding Office Action includes two prior art-based rejections. Claims 11-13, 18, 19, 21, 23, and 24 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 4,664,861 to Pritikin et al. Claims 14, 15, 17, and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Pritikin et al. These rejections are traversed.

The presently claimed invention is directed at a method of producing a separation matrix with eliminated or reduced microbially content. The method includes steps of: providing a microbially contaminated separation matrix in a housing or container, wherein the microbially contaminated separation matrix comprises a polymeric porous

material in beaded form, a microfiltration hollow-fiber, or a flat sheet membrane; adding an aqueous antimicrobial preservation composition, which comprises at least one alkyl paraben, to said separation matrix in said housing or container; allowing said aqueous antimicrobial preservation composition to exert its effect in said housing or container until the number of colony forming units (CFU) per g preservative composition is sufficiently reduced; and rinsing said aqueous antimicrobial preservation composition from said housing or container to provide the separation matrix with eliminated or reduced microbial content.

Pritikin et al. describe ready-to-stuff type food casings having sufficient moisture content that further moisture need not be added prior to stuffing. The casings are designed to contain an antimycotic agent to prevent spoilage of the food casing prior to use. See Pritikin at column 1, lines 6-11. The outstanding Office Action contends that:

“Pritikin et al. disclose a method of producing a matrix comprising the use of a fibrous tube in an aqueous bath to remove chemical impurities. The casing was then immersed in an aqueous preservation bath saturated with 1500 ppm of propyl paraben (See column 9, lines 15-21).”

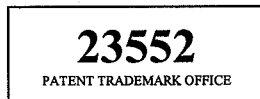
See the outstanding Office Action on page 5, lines 7-10. It is pointed out that column 5 9, lines 15-21, of Pritikin et al. describe an example where a clear synthetic small diameter fibrous sausage casing is prepared. Clearly, the present invention is not directed at a method of forming a clear synthetic small diameter fibrous sausage casing. Claim 11 has been amended to characterize the separation matrix according to the present claimed invention as a polymeric porous material in beaded form, a microfiltration hollow-fiber, or a flat sheet membrane. Accordingly, the presently claim invention is more clearly directed at treating separation matrices that are used in laboratory and industrial processes. The Applicants are clearly not claiming a method that utilizes a sausage casing as described by Pritikin et al.

Clearly, the claimed invention is not anticipated by the sausage casing manufacturing process described by Pritikin et al. Furthermore, one having ordinary skill in the art and involved in the field of laboratory and industrial separation matrices would

not have looked to Pritikin et al. for a method of producing a separation matrix with eliminated or reduced microbial content according to the presently claimed invention. It is submitted that one skilled in the art would not treat a separation matrix comprising a polymeric porous material in beaded form, a microfiltration hollow-fiber, or a flat sheet membrane according to the processes described by Pritikin et al. for the formation of sausage casings.

In view of the above comments, the claimed invention is not anticipated and would not have been obvious from Pritikin et al., and withdrawal of the rejections is requested.

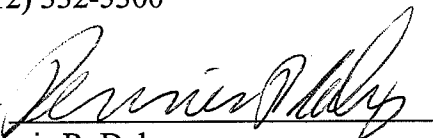
It is believed that this application is in condition for allowance. Early notice to this effect is noticeably solicited.



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Respectfully submitted,

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